

# Gurnet Light being moved farther inland

Erosion had brought sea within 50 feet

By Julie Pechilis  
The Patriot Ledger

**PLYMOUTH** — Gurnet Light, the nation's oldest wooden lighthouse, has started its journey to a new home away from the site where erosion was placing it in danger of falling into the sea.

The lighthouse had stood only 50 feet from the edge of a 45-foot cliff. On Friday, engineers lifted the 20-ton octagonal structure off its foundation and inched it onto a wooden platform with hydraulic lifts.

It will be placed on rollers and moved on tracks about 140 feet from the perilous site.

"It was like watching grass grow," Charles Dulany of the Coast Guard Auxiliary's Gurnet Flotilla said of the lifting process.

The 1843 lighthouse will be lowered to ground level on Monday, from where it can be wheeled to its new site. Like the old site, the new one is within the perimeter of Revolutionary War-era Fort Andrews.

The lighthouse's journey will end on Tuesday, when it is hoisted onto a new foundation.

"Aesthetically it'll look the same as it did before," said John DiVito of Northern Construction in Hingham. The Coast Guard contracted with Northern Construction and subcon-



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The 20-ton Gurnet Light in Plymouth is hoisted and then moved to save it from falling into the sea.

tractor D&K Building Movers of Scituate to move the lighthouse for just over \$200,000, DiVito said.

This is the third Massachusetts lighthouse move the Coast Guard has commissioned in two years, the other two being Highland Light in North Truro and Nauset Light in Eastham.

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The move was watched with great interest by residents of the remote peninsula that is the site of about 35 homes and summer cottages.

Heavy equipment had to be driven five miles along a dirt road to reach the lighthouse.

The move was delayed for a year because of resident concerns that the relocated beacon would be too close to their homes. An original plan was revised to address those concerns.

David Quaid of Falmouth, whose family has owned property on the peninsula since 1920, said the new plan met with residents' approval.

"I believe everyone was totally satisfied," he said.

He said his main concern was that the foghorn, which blows with house-shaking force, not be moved from its location at the original lighthouse site.

"Most of us are so used to it that we sleep through it, but that takes some seasoning, take my word for it," he said. The foghorn will stay where it is.

Also watching the move was Brenda Sabin of Easton, who grew up spending summers in an eight-room house on the peninsula.

As a little girl in the 1950s, Sabin used to be invited to climb the steep, spiraling lighthouse staircase in order to wind the light, a procedure that had to be done every four hours before it was automated in 1986.

"We would go up with the adults, it was a big deal then," she said.

She said that from the tiny room at the top you could see as far as Provincetown Tower.

When the eight-room house burned down, Sabin bought a two-room cottage that had originally been part of the lighthouse so her children would have the same summer experience.

Sabin, who wrote an essay about Gurnet Light that was published in the magazine *Lighthouse Digest* in 1995, said that for her the lighthouse is like an old friend.

"We are in love with it and it's certainly history, and I'm really thrilled to be part of this history," she said.

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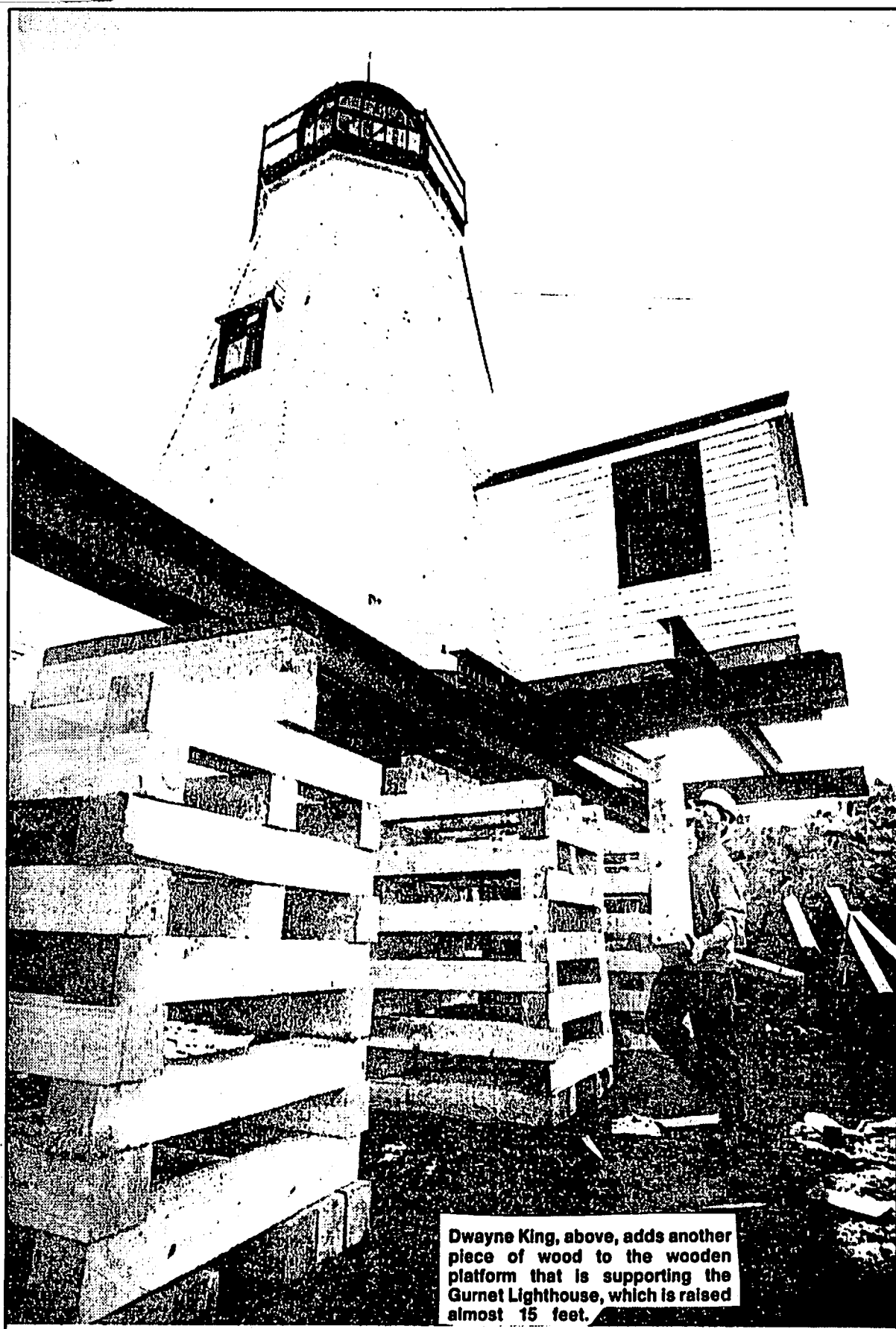
— Spectator Brenda Sabin, of Easton



Dwayne King of Brockton, a worker for subcontractor D&K Building Movers of Scituate, works on a wooden platform with hydraulic lifts onto which the Gurnet Lighthouse was hoisted.



At left, Frank Tedesco, Elaine Nudd and Brenda Savin look at a photo album full of old pictures of the lighthouse.



Dwayne King, above, adds another piece of wood to the wooden platform that is supporting the Gurnet Lighthouse, which is raised almost 15 feet.

At right, the new foundation is being built about 140 feet from the old site. The lighthouse, which is the oldest wooden lighthouse in the nation, is being moved inland because erosion was placing it in danger of falling into the ocean.

